

Reading Selection D

Reading Real-Life Narratives

Scan

1. Read the beginning and ending first.

Focus

2. Read the middle, paying specific attention to what the main character thinks about, says and does.

Review

3. Read the beginning and ending again.

Restate

4. In one or two sentences, state what the narrative is about.

Reflect

5. Reflect on what the narrative made you think and feel.

Viola Desmond — Civil Rights Pioneer

Maybe you haven't heard the name Viola Desmond, but she is an important figure in Canadian history. In 1946 in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, she challenged an unofficial law that forced African-Canadians to sit in segregated seating. This was a pivotal moment for civil rights in Canada.

Viola Desmond was a hairdresser and business owner in Halifax. She ran a beauty parlour and a school for hairdressers. While travelling to nearby New Glasgow in November of 1946, her car broke down. It couldn't be repaired until the next day, so she decided to see a movie to help pass the time.

She asked to buy a ticket for the main floor downstairs. The ticket seller told her that "you people," or African-Canadians, could only buy balcony seats. Viola Desmond paid for the ticket and sat downstairs anyway. Soon the usher told her to move. She refused. She offered to pay the difference in cost between the two tickets, and was told she couldn't. The theatre manager then called the police. She was arrested and thrown in jail for the night.

Even though racial segregation was regularly practised, Nova Scotia had no written laws to enforce it. In other words, the police couldn't charge Viola Desmond with a seating violation. But they were determined to charge her with a crime. The cost of a movie ticket included a small amount of tax. Viola Desmond had paid for a cheaper ticket upstairs, but had sat downstairs. For this, the authorities claimed she hadn't paid enough tax. She was charged and convicted for tax evasion. The amount of tax in question was one cent.

Viola Desmond appealed her conviction to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia. They refused to hear her case. Nevertheless, in her determination to fight for equality, she attracted much attention and support. Her case helped to end racial segregation in Nova Scotia.

Checklist for Reading Real-Life Narratives

- ☐ Have I scanned the first and last paragraphs so I know how the narrative begins and ends?
- ☐ Have I read the middle part of the narrative, focusing on what the main character thinks about, says and does?
- ☐ Have I reread the ending to remind myself of how the narrative ends?
- ☐ Do I know what the narrative is about?
- ☐ Have I reflected on what the narrative means to me?

Questions

1. Why did Viola Desmond decide to see a movie?
 - a) She was travelling to nearby New Glasgow.
 - b) She was travelling from Halifax.
 - c) She needed to pass some time before work.
 - d) Her car broke down.
2. What is the best meaning for the word “challenged” as used in paragraph 1?
 - a) followed
 - b) obeyed
 - c) created
 - d) defied
3. What is the best meaning for the word “segregation” as used in paragraph 4?
 - a) stereotyping
 - b) difference
 - c) customs
 - d) separation
4. Why are quotation marks used in paragraph 3?
 - a) to indicate that someone is speaking
 - b) to emphasize an important term
 - c) to show someone’s exact words
 - d) to provide a definition for African-Canadian
5. Which of the following best describes the key idea linking the first and last paragraphs?
 - a) Viola Desmond was an important figure in Canadian history.
 - b) Viola Desmond wanted people to know that racial segregation was wrong.
 - c) Viola Desmond refused to be pushed around.
 - d) Viola Desmond attracted a great deal of support for her cause.

5. In sentence 2, paragraph 4, "in other words" means
- a) on the other hand.
 - b) put another way.
 - c) at the same time.
 - d) finally.
7. Why does the usher tell Viola Desmond to move?
- a) The seat was reserved for someone else.
 - b) She hadn't paid for her ticket.
 - c) She refused to pay the difference in cost between the two tickets.
 - d) She wasn't allowed to sit on the main floor.
3. What does Viola Desmond do to try and keep her seat on the main floor of the theatre?
- a) She offers to pay the difference in cost between the two tickets.
 - b) She pays for her ticket and sits downstairs.
 - c) She ignores the usher.
 - d) She threatens to call the police.
9. Which of the events mentioned in paragraphs 4 and 5 happened first?
- a) Viola Desmond was thrown in jail.
 - b) Viola Desmond appeals her conviction.
 - c) Viola Desmond is convicted of tax evasion.
 - d) Viola Desmond is charged with tax evasion.
10. The word "nevertheless" (paragraph 5) is used to
- a) add an idea.
 - b) show sequence.
 - c) summarize.
 - d) contrast ideas.
11. Why was Viola Desmond convicted for tax evasion?
- a) She was an African-Canadian.
 - b) She did not pay for the tax that went with the higher-priced ticket.
 - c) She was charged with a seating violation.
 - d) She sat on the main floor of the theatre.